

# Justice for refugees and people seeking asylum would mean:

**Welcoming Refugees:** “Stopping the Boats” is designed to stop people from claiming asylum in Australia. People have a legal right to travel to Australia – by any means – to seek asylum. If we want to protect people from drowning, we need to provide other ways of people getting to Australia to seek asylum. Indonesia is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, so asylum seekers and refugees are essentially ‘stateless’ in Indonesia, with no hope of ever getting citizenship and a secure future. Australia should not be pushing responsibility for these people back onto Indonesia. We know people have died when their boats have been turned back<sup>1</sup>. Australia is spending millions of dollars ‘protecting our borders’ from vulnerable people in wooden boats – and denying them their right to seek asylum in Australia.

**Not sending asylum seekers offshore:** Claims for refugee status should be properly assessed in Australia. Australia should accept and support people found to be refugees. Asylum seekers are being sent to detention camps in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru. Amnesty International described the situation on Manus Island (PNG) as “tantamount to torture”, with detainees being denied sufficient water, medical help, privacy, and living in cramped conditions and unbearable heat<sup>2</sup>. Conditions on Nauru, where pregnant women and children have been sent are similarly inhumane. Offshore detention will cost \$2.867 billion for 2013/14<sup>3</sup>. These detention camps should be closed. Processing asylum seekers in the Australian community, with the right to work, while their claims are assessed, would be more humane and cheaper.

**Closing Australia’s Detention Centres:** Over 8000 refugees are currently detained in Australia, Nauru, Manus Island and Christmas Island, including 1028 children<sup>4</sup>. Detention leads to despair and often serious mental health issues. Mandatory detention is cruel, unnecessary and violates the right to freedom for people who have done no wrong. In addition 46 refugees with adverse ASIO assessments have been detained for more than 4 years and face indefinite detention; they have never been charged or tried, and have no formal right of review. No other country has long term mandatory detention, and it is illegal to detain people without charge.

## Fair and speedy processing of Asylum Claims

**and Family Reunion:** Around 30,000 asylum seekers are currently living in the community on Bridging Visas. Many have been waiting years with no right to work and assistance equivalent to 89% of the lowest centrelink payment or less. A fair and thorough process shouldn’t take years. A recent policy change effectively removes the possibility of family reunion for anyone who came by boat since 2001 including those recognised as refugees. No permanent protection visas are currently being issued, leaving thousands of asylum seekers in limbo. Processing refugee claims and issuing of permanent, not temporary, visas should re-commence immediately.

**No Deportations to Danger:** Australia has effectively deported Tamil people back to danger in Sri Lanka through “enhanced screening processes” that do not properly assess their claims. Now the government has started to try and forcibly deport asylum seekers back to Afghanistan as well. We know that people forcibly deported to danger from Australia have been tortured and killed in the past<sup>5</sup>.

**Increasing the refugee quota:** Australia accepts nearly 200,000 migrants each year, but only 13,750 refugees. We can afford to be more generous and accept more people fleeing persecution and life threatening situations in our region. Australia currently ranks only 49th in the world for refugee intake per capita<sup>6</sup>, or 91st when our national wealth is taken into account.<sup>7</sup>

### Sources

1. <http://theconversation.com/towing-back-the-boats-bad-policy-whatever-way-you-look-at-it-15082>
2. “This is Breaking People” Amnesty International report on detention on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, 2013
3. Budget 2013/14 [http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp1/html/bp1\\_bst6-01.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp1/html/bp1_bst6-01.htm)
4. Immigration Dept Statistics, Dec 31, 2013 <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics>
5. Edmund Rice Centre “Deported to Danger Reports” available at <http://www.erc.org.au>
6. UNHCR GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT 2012
7. <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2011/01/05/glance-who-takes-most-asylum-claims>

**Australia’s policies are violating human rights and are in breach of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention**